

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 01182 271446Z
ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9385

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PDEV, MA

SUBJECT: NATIONAL DAY IN MADAGASCAR

1. PRINCIPAL CEREMONIES FOR MADAGASCAR'S NATIONAL DAY ON JUNE 26 WERE A MORNING MILITARY PARADE, A MID-DAY PRESIDENTIAL GARDEN PARTY, AND AN AFTERNOON DISPLAY OF MUSIC AND SINGING, GYMNASTICS BY STUDENTS AND SOLDIERS, AND A UCLA-TYPE CARD SHOW NORTH KOREAN STYLE.

2. BOTH MORNING AND AFTERNOON CEREMONIES WERE WELL ORGANIZED FOR BOTH PARTICIPANTS AND INVITED GUESTS. RATSIRAKA WAS PRESENT AT AND FOCAL POINT OF BOTH, WITH THE STADIUM DOMINATED BY HIS PORTRAIT. HE MADE ONLY A BRIEF TOKEN APPEARANCE AT HIS GARDEN PARTY, SHAKING HANDS PERFUNCTORILY WITH A FEW OF THE NEAREST DIGNITARIES, NOT INCLUDING ME, AND LEAVING IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER. AT THE MILITARY SHOW HE WALKED BY ALL THE MILITARY UNITS PRESENT, WEARING A HEAVY BLACK OVERCOAT WHICH, THEY SAY, IS TO COVER UP HIS BULLET-PROOF JACKET, ACCOMPANIED FORWARD, AFT AND ABEAM BY NUMEROUS MILITARY SECURITY GUARDS, DRESSED IN CAMOUFLAGE SUITS AND TOTING AK-47'S. HE STOPPED ALONG THE STANDS SEATING THE MALAGASY OFFICIALS TO SHAKE NUMEROUS HANDS.

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3. MASS DRILLS BY STUDENTS, YOUNG AND OLD, AND BY MILITARY WERE IMPRESSIVE IN SCALE, COMPLEXITY, AND EXECUTION. BUT CARD SHOW REALLY TURNED THE CROWD ON. NORTH KOREANS, WHO HAD BEEN DRILLING ALL THE PARTICIPANTS FOR MONTHS, WERE VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE AND VISIBLY PROUD OF THEIR PUPILS' PERFORMANCE.

4. CARD SHOW FEATURED VARIOUS MULTICOLOR INSPIRATIONAL PICTURES INNTUDG ONE OF RATSIRAKA AND ANOTHER OF A MONEY-CLUTCHING CAUCASIAN CAPITALIST WITH SHOVELS BEING HELD TO HIS THROAT BY MALAGASY PEASANTS AND SOLDIERS. MANY OF SLOGANS FLASHED LEFT WESTERN ENVOYS SITTING ON THEIR HANDS: "DEATH TO CAPITALISTS, IMPERIALISTS AND RACISTS," "ALL REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLEAGGKIWI DITE," "DOWN WITH KAPITALISM" (SPELLED EXACTLY THAT WAY), ETC. SLOGANS BOOSTING THE OAU AND NON-ALIGNMENT WERE A WELCOME RELIEF.

5. SO FAR ONLY NATIONAL DAY MESSAGE TO APPEAR IN OFFICIAL PRESS BULLETIN IS THAT FROM USSR, ALTHOUGH REFERENCE IS MADE THAT OTHERS RECEIVED FROM GABON, POLAND, LYBIA, EGYPT AND MAURITIUS.

6. DATT REPORTING SIGNIFICANT MILITARY ASPECTS OF MORNING PARADE.BARRETT

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